

a part of their natural history work are of interest and value to scholars in America and Europe alike, and it would be wisdom to strengthen this work. The savage races of all that part of the continent are rapidly changing their institutions, language and other characteristics, and if they are to be studied and their history is to become a part of the history of the world, the work of collecting the data must be begun at once and be pushed with vigour." We need scarcely say that there is no man on this continent whose word is more precious on such a question than Major Powell's, and it is to be hoped that, in the reorganization which we have been led to look for, provision for this hitherto unpaid branch of the Survey's work will not be omitted.

### OUR POLYGLOT EMPIRE.

While some of our Canadian statesmen are endeavouring to do away with the use of a second language for official purposes, a movement is afoot at the metropolis of the Empire for the practical recognition of its polyglot character. Polyglot the British Empire is and is likely to remain. We have had several attempts in recent times to overcome the difficulty of diverse speech by the invention of a common tongue. Some account of these attempts has already appeared in our columns. But the most enthusiastic upholders of Volapük, or any of its rivals, must acknowledge that there are circumstances in which its adoption would be impracticable. Out of Europe and its colonies such a plan could only be made available in rare and exceptional cases. The only certain way of holding communication with the peoples of the East, of Africa and Oceanica, is to learn their languages or teach them ours. For many long centuries England (like other countries) has depended almost exclusively on the services of the interpreter. That functionary has, indeed, played no unimportant part in the history of civilization on this American continent as well as in the Old World. Any one who has read the negotiations for any of our Indian treaties (as, for instance, in the late Hon. A. Morris's instructive narrative) will have some notion of the *modus operandi*, or rather the *modus loquendi* on such occasions. In that delightful record of travel, Kinglake's "Eothen," there is an amusing, but, perhaps, not very exaggerated, picture of a scene in which the interpreter is the bond of sympathy between the speakers. Even when the official is thoroughly accomplished and is master of the idioms of both the tongues between which he mediates, the method is awkward and embarrassing. It may, at critical moments in the history of nations, be of grave consequence that every shade of meaning should be preserved in the transfer from speech to speech, and it is more than possible that misunderstandings have arisen or been seriously aggravated through the ignorance or dishonesty of the translator.

For these and other reasons it was deemed well that in the central capital of an Empire which harbours members of so many different races, speaking a vast variety of languages, there should be an institution at which a knowledge of the leading Oriental tongues and dialects could be acquired by young men entering on the paths of commerce or diplomacy. The need of such an institution has long been felt. Ever since England won control of India, some measure of linguistic training was considered requisite for those who served the government of that great and populous country. That any one person could learn all the languages

of the peninsula is, of course, out of the question. Sir William Hunter, on the authority of Mr. Brandreth, computes its non-Aryan languages alone at 142, a list of which he gives in "The Indian Empire: its History, People and Products." And this list does not include Hindi, Hindustani, Marathi, and the other descendants of the Sanscrit mother tongue, which are more or less akin to our Western Aryan languages. In India and the adjacent countries, with which British administrators and officials have dealings more or less constant and intimate, there are probably not less than 200 spoken forms of speech. More than forty years ago Dr. Latham published a treatise on the "Ethnology of the British Colonies and Dependencies," a work which may still be consulted with advantage by any one who would know how far the British Empire represents the races, languages and religions of humanity. Even in our own heritage in the New World there are communities in which the prevalent tongues are the extremes of Latin, of Teutonic and of Oriental speech; and apart from these and all the tongues and dialects that intervene, there are great families of language that have their homes altogether or almost entirely within the limits of the Dominion. In the British West Indies important groups of the European, African and Asiatic languages are represented. In British Honduras and British Guiana Central and South American tongues are spoken by the aborigines. Passing to Europe, we find Heligoland, Gibraltar, Malta, all presenting their respective linguistic peculiarities, while the British possessions in Africa are rich in various treasure for the philologist.

It is in the East, however, that England comes in contact with a veritable Babel of tongues—some in groups, some isolated. Some of these it is essential to the maintenance of good relations between the ruling class and the communities that they govern that at least a certain number of English officials should be able to converse in. The vernaculars of India have, for more than a hundred years, been studied with more or less success by Anglo-Indians. The universities of the United Kingdom have done a good deal in encouraging Oriental learning, and have produced some excellent Oriental scholars. Sanscrit, Persian, Arabic, Turkish and Chinese have been added to Hebrew, Chaldee and Syriac, and lectures have been given on the history, grammar and literatures of these languages. But for practical purposes something more was required, and when in 1887 the Imperial Institute was created to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee, it was thought advisable to inaugurate, in connection with it, a School for Modern Oriental Studies. Last year the preliminary arrangements were completed in association with University and King's Colleges, London, and a few weeks ago Prof. Max Müller delivered the inaugural address before a distinguished gathering, over which the Prince of Wales presided. The army and navy, diplomacy, administration, India, the colonies, including Canada, commerce, the great seats of learning, and the learned professions were well represented. Major-General Sir C. Teesdale, V.C., Sir Allen Young, the Duke of Fife, Sir Lyon Playfair, M.P., Sir Charles Tupper, Bart., Sir John Lubbock, Bart., Lord Harris (whom some of our readers may remember as a cricketer), Sir Monier Williams, Sir F. A. Abel, F.R.S., Lord Rayleigh (who presided at the Montreal meeting of the British Association), Sir W. W. Hunter, the historian of India, Sir Saul Samuel, Lord Hers-

chell, chairman, and Sir Lowthian Bell, vice-chairman, of the Institute, Sir Somers Vine, Sir Douglas Galton, and several other illustrious persons were at the Royal Institution on the occasion.

Professor Müller, in his address, pointed out that, instead of the movement being one to excite surprise, what was really strange was that England, which had so many interests in the East, so many dealings with Oriental peoples, should have been so long in establishing such a school. St. Petersburg, Vienna and Berlin have all been beforehand with the British capital as centres of Oriental study. In France the government founded long ago *une école pour les langues Orientales vivantes*. The Oriental Seminary at Vienna is a famous and fruitful institution, and the Imperial press has one of the richest existing collections of Oriental types. The Seminary of Oriental Languages at Berlin, though recently established, bids fair to surpass all kindred seats of learning. It has a Professor of Chinese, assisted by two native teachers, one for north, the other for south, Chinese, and the same plan is applied to Japanese, Arabic, Persian, Hindustani, Syriac, Turkish, and other languages. It has also a teacher of Swaheli, the most important of the East African tongues. Of its 115 students, twenty-three are devoted to mercantile pursuits, four to theology, fifteen to philosophy, medicine and physical science, three are technical students, five officers of the army. The success of this movement in Germany speaks volumes for the earnestness with which our Teutonic cousins are bent on pushing German interests abroad. German diplomatists, explorers and merchants will go forth well equipped to their respective spheres of labour. Nor is Russia behind in ardent pursuit of this branch of knowledge. Not even Germany has excelled her in producing polyglot diplomatists, soldiers, traders, and men of research. It is full time, therefore, that England, with citizens and interests in every quarter of the globe, where every tongue is spoken by people of every colour, should not be left in the rear on the ground that she has made her own. The new school starts well. It gives instruction in all the chief Eastern languages, from Romaic and Russian to Chinese and Japanese—native teachers aiding learned professors. Her missionaries, explorers, diplomatists, administrators and men of science, will no longer have to depend on the dragoman. The importance of a knowledge of living languages in both peace and war was clearly set forth by Prof. Müller. He recalled, as not without significance, in view of Russia's progress in Central Asia, that more than fifty years ago the Imperial Academy of St. Petersburg had a professor of Pushtu, of which in England there is as yet no teacher, though it is the language of Afghanistan. How many Englishmen may have perished through lack of knowledge! In war, as in statecraft and diplomacy, England would undoubtedly have profited had she followed Russia's example in this respect, as in the Soudan and Burmah the commissariat officers had good reason to know. To the mercantile community the knowledge of modern languages of the East as of the West would prove a precious boon. He knew what the lack of it cost some persons from the frequent letters of inquiry that he received. Prof. Müller closed his address by dwelling on the moral effect of such studies in removing prejudices and misconceptions. To become acquainted with a language is to obtain a more intimate knowledge of the people speaking it, to get to their hearts and to understand their aspirations.